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Mayor Dixon Gathers Local Leaders to *ACT! Against AIDS* in Baltimore

Baltimore, MD (October 3, 2007) – Mayor Sheila Dixon, the Baltimore City Health Department and the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene AIDS Administration will join the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and African-American leaders throughout the city in a Heightened National Response to the HIV/AIDS Crisis Among African Americans with a press conference at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, October 3, 2007, at City Hall.

Mayor Dixon is asking Baltimore leaders to **ACT!** – Promoting HIV/AIDS Awareness, Communication, and Testing in response to the HIV/AIDS crisis in Baltimore. Leaders from the arts and entertainment, business, civic, education, faith, health and media sectors will gather for a morning workshop session and dialogue on the future of coordinated efforts to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS in the city.

The Baltimore metropolitan area has the second highest rate of AIDS case reports in the country with more than 40.4 per 100,000. As of December 2006, 15,965 people are living with HIV/AIDS in Baltimore. In addition, AIDS is the leading cause of death among African Americans aged 25 to 44 in Maryland. In 2006 86% of new HIV cases in Baltimore City are African American. The face of AIDS is changing, and is no longer an exclusive epidemic in the IV drug community; it is affecting children and heterosexual women.

“Whether through our loved ones, our employees or our neighbors, the AIDS crisis in Baltimore affects each and every one of us,” said Mayor Dixon. “And it’s going to take each and every one of us working together to educate and inform the African American community in how to take control of their health and take responsibility for their future,” said Mayor Dixon.

“The key to success against AIDS in Baltimore is prevention,” said Dr. Sharfstein. “We can prevent new infections by caring for people with the disease and educating those who are not infected.” The *ACT! Against AIDS* mobilization effort seeks to break the silence and increase awareness of HIV/AIDS among friends, family and co-workers; deliver communication messages in places where African Americans live, work, play and worship; and promote testing that will lead to early diagnosis and treatment of HIV/AIDS. “This important event is an opportunity to work collectively to call attention to the HIV epidemic in Maryland, to educate about prevention, testing, and treatment options, and to fight the stigma that allows HIV/AIDS to spread said Heather Hauck, Director of the Maryland State AIDS Administration.”

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